

Blanche Lincoln

U.S. Senator for Arkansas

Fighting for Arkansas's Seniors



Summer 2010

Dear Fellow Arkansan,

I believe in the promise our government made to working Americans – that if we work hard, Medicare and Social Security will be there to help us in our golden years.

During my career in the Senate, I have fought to ensure that Arkansas's seniors receive the care and resources they need. I have worked hard to gain committee assignments that provide the most benefit to Arkansas's seniors. I am a member of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicare and Social Security. I also chair the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy. I am especially proud to have a seat on the Senate Special Committee on Aging, which conducts oversight and makes recommendations on government programs for seniors.

More than 500,000 Arkansans are enrolled in Medicare. On their behalf, I fought successfully to reduce the Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage gap known as the “Doughnut Hole,” which will save seniors money beginning this year. I also fought to protect seniors from losing benefits or the ability to see their doctors if they have discovered they signed up for a Medicare Advantage plan that does not meet their needs.

I am particularly proud of my bipartisan Elder Justice Act, which is now law. It is the first-ever federal law enacted to address elder abuse in a comprehensive manner. The Elder Justice Act creates a comprehensive approach to preventing, detecting and treating elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Another priority of mine has been to ensure that seniors do not lose their Social Security benefits. Last year, I pushed for relief for Arkansas's beneficiaries who will not receive a Cost of Living Adjustment because of the economy. I have also consistently opposed attempts to privatize Social Security. Throughout my career in the Senate, I have voted at least 21 times to protect Social Security and extend its solvency.

In addition, I have worked hard to secure much-needed funding for programs like Meals on Wheels that help to reduce food insecurity among the elderly.

I am proud of my work on behalf of Arkansas's seniors, and I will continue my fight to ensure that they receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.

With Arkansas Pride,

Blanche Lincoln
U.S. Senator



Lincoln visits Woodland Heights, a retirement living center in Little Rock.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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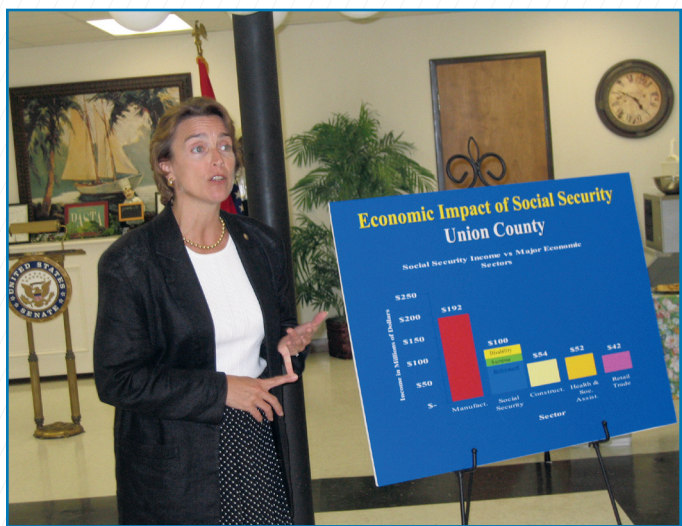
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NEW IN 2010

New Law Will Combat Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Senator Lincoln helped pass a new law called the Elder Justice Act, which she has championed since 2002. The law creates a comprehensive approach to ensuring that adequate public-private infrastructure and resources exist to prevent, detect, treat, understand, intervene in, and – where appropriate – prosecute elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. **Elder justice is the right of every older individual to be free of abuse, neglect and exploitation.**



Senator Lincoln conducts a series of town hall meetings focused on Social Security.

New Lincoln Legislation

The Economic Fairness for Seniors Act would provide economic relief for those impacted by the lack of a COLA

For the first time in more than 30 years, the Social Security Administration announced there would be no cost-of-living adjustment for beneficiaries in 2010. For seniors, veterans and people with disabilities on fixed incomes and facing increased health costs, the lack of a COLA will undoubtedly cause significant economic hardships.

Lincoln's legislation would:

- Provide \$250 economic relief payments to Social Security recipients, veterans and people with disabilities. The lack of a COLA will impact Arkansas's approximately 620,000 Social Security beneficiaries.
- Protect all Social Security recipients from Medicare premium increases in the absence of a COLA.
- Assess the need for a Consumer Price Index that more accurately reflects true inflation for seniors. Social Security COLAs have been tied to the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Workers and Clerical Workers, which may not be the best guidepost for ensuring that the benefits seniors receive are keeping pace with inflation.

WHY IS THE ELDER JUSTICE ACT NEEDED?

- There are anywhere from between 500,000 and five million older individuals who are abused in this country yearly.
- It is estimated that 84 percent of all cases of elder abuse are never reported.
- There are three types of elder abuse: **abuse and neglect in homes and domestic settings; abuse and neglect in institutions and other types of residential care; and financial fraud and exploitation.**
- While other types of abuse – like domestic violence and child abuse – have been recognized and receive sizable federal funding, elder abuse remains under-researched, under-reported and under-funded.

WHAT DOES THE ELDER JUSTICE ACT DO?

- On March 23, 2010, the Elder Justice Act was signed into law.
- The law will provide federal leadership to those on the front lines who are fighting elder abuse with scarce resources and fragmented systems.
- The bill provides \$400 million over four years for dedicated funding for Adult Protective Services.
- It provides \$26 million to establish and support the Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Forensic Centers, which will develop forensic expertise and provide services relating to elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- It establishes a National Training Institute for surveyors of long-term care facilities.
- It authorizes \$67.5 million in grants to enhance long-term care staffing through training and recruitment incentives for individuals seeking or maintaining employment in long-term care, either in a facility or a community-based long-term care entity.



U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln meets with attendees of the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging's Elder Law Task Force Conference in Little Rock.

Senator Lincoln is Working to Improve Medicare for More Than 500,000 Arkansas Beneficiaries

The new health care law will expand the life of the Medicare Trust Fund until at least 2029, a 12-year extension due to a reduction in waste, fraud and abuse, as well as slowed growth of Medicare costs.

Starting in 2011, Medicare will cover certain preventive services without charging seniors the Part B coinsurance or deductible. In addition, Medicare beneficiaries will have access to a free annual wellness exam.

Ensuring seniors have access to affordable prescription drugs

- In 2003, Senator Lincoln voted for the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit so that Arkansas's Medicare beneficiaries would have access to affordable prescription drugs.
- Since that time, she has supported making improvements to the program, including working to reduce the Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage gap known as the "Doughnut Hole."
- **89,800 Arkansas** seniors hit the "Doughnut Hole" each year. Starting this year, seniors who have to pay for their drugs in the "Doughnut Hole" will get a one-time, tax-free \$250 rebate from Medicare to help pay for prescriptions.
- Starting in 2011, if you have high prescription drug costs that put you in the "Doughnut Hole," you'll get a 50 percent discount on brand-name drugs while you are in the "Doughnut Hole."
- Starting in 2011, if you have high prescription drug costs, you will get a 50 percent discount on covered brand-name drugs while you're in the "Doughnut Hole." Over time, what you have to pay for prescription drugs in the "Doughnut Hole" will decrease until it reaches 25 percent in 2020 for both brand-name and generic drugs.

Cracking down on fraudulent marketing tactics of Medicare Advantage

- Senator Lincoln's "Medicare Advantage Lemon Law," which has been signed into law, enacts important consumer protections for seniors who have mistakenly signed up for a Medicare Advantage plan without realizing that they would lose traditional Medicare benefits.
- The legislation creates a 45-day period (January 1- February 15) beginning in 2011 during which beneficiaries who enroll in Medicare Advantage or prescription drug plans in the annual enrollment period can disenroll and return to traditional fee-for-service Medicare.
- This policy will help protect seniors from losing their benefits or their ability to see the doctors they know and trust if they discover they have signed up for a Medicare Advantage plan that does not cover their doctors or meet their health care needs.

Fighting to ensure Medicare meets the needs of Arkansas's seniors

- Each year, Senator Lincoln supports the extension of certain Medicare provisions to ensure that Arkansas's seniors have continued access to necessary physical, occupational, and speech/language therapy services, as well as pathology services performed at independent laboratories that often serve rural areas of the state.
- She has passed legislation to provide Medicare coverage of diabetes screening as well as legislation to provide Medicare payments to providers to educate kidney disease patients about their treatment options. Diabetes screening is an extremely valuable preventive health tool, and Senator Lincoln's **Kidney Disease Educational Benefits Act of 2007** is aimed at keeping kidney disease patients healthier, and if possible, off renal dialysis and in their own homes, for as long as possible.
- She has also passed legislation to allow for cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation services under Medicare.

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Lincoln Recognized for Her Work on Behalf of Arkansas's Seniors

In 2010, Lincoln received the **National Kidney Foundation's Council of Advanced Practitioners "Nostradamus Award,"** for her work in passing the Kidney Disease Education Benefits Act. The legislation resulted in new Medicare reimbursement for kidney disease educational sessions aimed at keeping chronic kidney disease patients healthier, and possibly off dialysis for longer. She also received the **National Osteoporosis Foundation Congressional Champion** award for her work in preserving patient access to osteoporosis screening in Medicare.

In 2009, Senator Lincoln received **AARP's annual Congressional Leadership Award,** for her leadership in combating elder abuse and exploitation. She was given the **American College of Physicians Joseph F. Boyle Award for Distinguished Public Service,** for her "Outstanding Public Service Toward Improving the Delivery of Health Care," particularly her work to improve

chronic care coordination in Medicare. **The CHRISTUS Health's Annual Eagle Award** was also presented to Senator Lincoln in 2009. The award is presented yearly to one lawmaker who upholds outstanding leadership and a strong commitment to health care issues. Senator Lincoln received it for her work on improving quality-of-care standards for Medicare beneficiaries in long-term acute care hospitals (LTACHs).

Throughout her career in the Senate, Senator Lincoln has also received the **American Geriatrics Society Congressional Leadership Award,** for her work on geriatric chronic care coordination, specifically her bill called the RE-Aligning Care Act; the **American Association for Homecare Legislator of the Year Award** for her work on behalf of COPD patients (most of whom are in Medicare); and the **Alzheimer's Association Humanitarian Award,** for her leadership in support of people with Alzheimer's disease, particularly in geriatric care.

Contact me

For assistance with seniors issues or to learn more about **my** work on behalf of Arkansas's seniors, visit www.lincoln.senate.gov or call **my** office at **501-375-2993**.

To stay informed on the latest issues and upcoming events, visit **my** online office at www.lincoln.senate.gov and sign up for **my** e-newsletter.

Little Rock

912 West Fourth Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
501-375-2993

Dumas

101 E. Waterman
Dumas, Arkansas 71693
870-382-1023

Jonesboro

Federal Building
615 South Main, Suite 315
Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401
870-910-6896

Fayetteville

208 N. College Ave. Suite A
Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701
479-251-1224

Texarkana

Miller County Courthouse
Texarkana, Arkansas 71854
870-774-3106